DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 050 EC 124 315

AUTHOR Wallace, Gail R.
TITLE The Teaching Parents Program.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of The Council for Exceptional Children (58th, Philadelphia, PA, April, 1980, Session T-27).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Modification; Elementary Education; Emotional Disturbances; *Moderate Mental Retardation; Multiple Disabilities; *Parent Education; *Parent Participation; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Teacher Role; Visual Impairments

ABSTRACT

The Teaching Parents Program at a center for moderately retarded students (5 to 13 years old) who may also be visually handicapped, multiply handicapped, or emotionally disturbed allows parents to learn principles of behavior modification, task analysis, and data collection while working with a child in the classroom. Materials used in the program are described, and the roles of the teacher and paraprofessional are considered. Initial evaluation of the program has demonstrated minimal parent absenteeism, cooperation of classroom teachers, and transfer of the parents' newly learned skills to use with their own children. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED187050

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE TEACHING PARENTS PROGRAM

Gail R. Wallace

Coordinator-Teacher of Teaching Parents Program

Heritage Center

2225 Heritage Drive, N.E.

Atlanta, Georgia 30345

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gail R. Wallace

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EC 124315

No longer can we fail to recognize the value of the help of parents in our educational system (Strenecky, McLaughlin and Edge, 1979; Edge, Strenecky and McLaughlin, 1979; Moersch, 1978). In the past, parent interest has been responsible for program growth and legislation. Much of the progress during the past thirty years in securing better services for handicapped children has been the result of organized efforts of parents at the federal, state and local levels. The two major areas resulting from such involvement are free public education and parent participation in the placement of their children (Kroth and Scholl, 1978), as Public Law 94-142 reveals. PL94-142, with its concepts of mainstreaming and normalization, requires that IEP (individualized education program) objectives be met effectively, quickly and with minimum expense (Smith and Smith, 1979). One of the most important aspects of this piece of legislation is the emphasis on providing opportunities for parents to be involved in their exceptional child's educational program, and implies the need for parent training (Turnball, Strickland and Brantley, 1978; Edge, Strenecky and McLaughlin, 1979; Moersch, 1978; Smith and Smith, 1978). Therefore, it is obvious that parent involvement is already playing a big part in the field of Special Education. If the parent is utilized in the classroom, there will be advantages for the child, the parent and the teacher, as well as the entire field of Special Education (Moersch, 1978).

The Teaching Parents Program is a pilot program which offers all of these advantages. The parents learn teaching techniques and principles of behavior modification which can also be used at home with their own exceptional children. Studies show that the parents will model the teaching strategies they have observed to help their own child with feeding, toileting or behavior problems (Moersch, 1978). Their own children will be more apt

to accept their parent's help at home when they have seen their parents as teachers at school (Kroth and Scholl, 1978). The child's educational progress is accelerated by this consistency (Fredericks et al., 1977; Spradlin and Spradlin, 1976) and the load of the teachers whose students participate in the Program is lightened because many of the short term objectives are taught by the Teaching Parents. If parents are trained to use materials, they improve their skills in working with students, learn to understand and accept educational limitations and are better prepared to participate in IEP conferences. This awareness gives them a greater appreciation of the efforts and goals of the school (Kroth and Scholl, 1978). As they increase their skills and sense of competence, parents also feel more at home in the school setting (Moersch, 1978).

Being part of an educational team has psychological benefits for the parents, giving them a sense of accomplishment (Moersch, 1978), gratification for contributing to the development of their own children (Turnbull, 1978; Schoenig, 1978), and a sense of dignity and worth (Moersch, 1978; Peters and Stephenson, 1979).

Studies have shown that parents have been successfully trained to teach self-help, motor and cognitive skills, as well as how to deal with behavior problems (Fredericks et al., 1977; Kroth, 1978; Turnbull, 1978). A parent with this training provides the teacher with valuable assistance and reduces the teacher-student ratio (Turnbull, 1978; Benson and Ross, 1972). As the teacher and the involved parent get to know each other, they form a personal partnership. The lines of communication remain open. There will probably be less conflicts and, should misunderstandings occur, they can be resolved more easily because of this relationship (Kroth and Scholl, 1978; Moersch, 1978). In these ways, the teacher benefits from parent involvement.

PLANNING THE PROGRAM

The Teaching Parents Program's success depends on a well-planned parent-recruitment strategy. In the spring of the year in which the program was to be implemented, the proposal was presented to the PTA Executive Board of Heritage Center and to the teachers, so that all would be aware of the new program. Before school closed in June, each classroom teacher was asked for names of parents who had shown an interest in their child's progress, the class, or just a general interest in the Center (Kroth and Scholl, 1978). The week before school re-opened in the fall, these parents were telephoned and invited to attend a meeting to discuss an "exciting new program" which would be starting. Forty-two parents agreed to attend the meeting.

On registration day for the fall term, a poster announced the time of the meeting. Parents were welcomed as they came in, given an information sheet describing the program - a reminder of the date and time of the introductory meeting - and personally invited to attend. On the day before the scheduled meeting, a follow-up phone call was made.

From the beginning, it was felt that approximately one-half of the parents contacted would actually attend the meeting and this estimation proved to be correct. Of the 42 who agreed to attend, 24 came to the meeting. Twenty-one of this number committed themselves to the Program and 19 completed training. These 19 are the Teaching Parents in the Program today. Each Teaching Parent gives one hour per week, and it is noteworthy that two are fathers who work their teaching time into their weekly schedule and four are working mothers, one of whom gives up her lunch hour to teach.

As an incentive to the Teaching Parents, their children may be included in the first group of students. Parents do not teach their own children: working with other children with various handicaps different

a different child is referred into the Program by the classroom teacher, using a referral sheet provided by the Teaching Parents Program. This referral sheet includes the following information: behavioral or medical problems, type of reinforcement used in the clasroom, two IEP short term objectives or any other information helpful in working with the child. Because of its confidential nature, this referral sheet is not included with the other forms kept on the clipboard, described below.

MATERIALS

A clipboard is provided for each student in the Program. Attached to it are an identity badge, a cover sheet, parent permission form, data collection sheet, parent comment sheet, and the child's resource schedule. The identity badge is worn by the Teaching Parent during teaching time. This practice is important since the Teaching Parents accompany their students from their classroom to the resource room and should be easily identifiable by the staff members. This badge also provides the Teaching Parent with a feeling of belonging to a team and a sense of pride in their involvement.

The cover sheet serves two purposes: it contains the student's name, the classroom teacher's name and room number. If the child is in another location (resource room) at teaching time, this fact is indicated on the cover sheet so the Teaching Parent can locate the student. In addition, this sheet is signed by the parent at the time of arrival and serves as a record of Teaching Parent's attendance.

The data collection sheet is a record of the student's progress. It indicates "correct response," "incorrect response," "no response," and "correction procedure." The "correction procedure" used by the Teaching Parent may be a prime, model, prompt, or guide (Alberto and Scholfield,

from their own child's is a valuable experience. For example, parents of young children who teach older students will be better able to anticipate possible future problems or successes in learning (Kroth and Scholl, 1978). Also, the Teaching Parents' schedule is arranged so that their own children are not in the classroom, thus avoiding possible distraction.

The Teaching Parents Program is implemented by a teacher functioning as program coordinator, and a paraprofessional. Before the teaching schedule is formulated, instruction on teaching strategies, principles of behavior modification and methods of collecting data is given to the Teaching Parents during their five-week training period (which consists of one hour per week). A film strip is shown on teaching self-help skills to a pre-schooler, demonstrating task analysis, chaining, shaping and fading (Westphall, 1978). The Teaching Parent has the opportunity to role-play, to observe teaching situations, and to teach with supervision. Should a problem occur as a parent is working with a student, the teacher and paraprofessional are always available. This "instant feedback" is very valuable and is considered to be part of the ongoing training of the Teaching Parents (Fredericks, Baldwin and Grove, 1978; Fredericks et al., 1977).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

Heritage Center, where the Teaching Parents Program is bein implemented, is a Special Education Center where 50 staff members serve 103 mentally retarded (TMR) students, who may also be visually impaired, multi-handicapped, or emotionally disturbed. The chronological ages range from 5 to 13 years of age with abilities ranging from SMR to borderline EMR. The Teaching Parent works on two IEP objectives, a described on a referral sheet which range from establishing eye contact or the lengthening of the attention span to writing cursive or adding a column of three numerals. When a student reaches his or her objectives by meeting the established criterion,

THE PARAPROFESSIONAL

The importance of the training of the paraprofessional who is involved in the Teaching Parents Program cannot be overestimated. The paraprofessional assists in the parent training as well as evaluating and up-dating the data sheet on the clipboards. A background in teaching and complete understanding of the Program are assets that add to the efficiency of the team. At times, the paraprofessional will have to teach and take data for an absent Teaching Parent. The paraprofessional's ability to follow instructions and to work independently are characteristics necessary for a smoothly flowing Program. Understanding behavioral objectives, task analysis and behavior modification terminology generally is part of the paraprofessional's experience. A Training Manual for Parents of Retarded Children, which defines these terms, is available to the paraprofessional and the Teaching Parent. The teacher-coordinator assists the paraprofessional when needed, since working as a team is very important to the success of the Program. Flexibility and stability, as well as a sense of humor, help to maintain an atmosphere where both Teaching Parents and students are comfortable.

THE RESOURCE ROOM

The resource room is bright and cheerful. Children's art work is displayed and bulletin boards are changed monthly. There is a warm, cozy atmosphere which is appreciated by both the Teaching Parents and students

The classroom used in the Program is divided into three areas: one for the Teaching Parents, one for students, and one for the teacher-coordinator and the paraprofessional. The teaching area is divided into cubicles with desks and chairs for both primary and intermediate students. Individualized materials in labeled containers are arranged on shelves; the clipboards are hung in rows according to the days the students are taught.

1979) and is specified on the comment sheet. (One notes that the term is applied differently from Fredericks et al., 1979).

The comment sheet contains written communication from the Teaching Parent about the teaching experiences of the day. It includes successes or problems that occurred during the teaching period. The data collection sheet and the comment sheet together provide a source of pertinent information when they are evaluated.

The resource schedule includes the times and locations of the student's activities at all times of the school day.

Each participating student has a personalized container (e.g. a plastic dishpan, labeled with the child's name) which holds the materials which are being used by the Teaching Parent. This container is located on a shelf close to the work area and is easily accessible to the Teaching Parent. The clipboards and individualized materials are an important part of this Program and much time is spent evaluating and up-dating them. Similarly, time and effort are devoted to keeping the Program cohesive.

THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

Working closely with the classroom teachers is vital, for they generally know what works best for their students. Since the objectives are taken directly from the child's IEP, the expertise of the classroom teacher is necessary in defining problems. Classroom teachers regularly demonstrate to the Teaching Parents exactly how they want to have a specific skill taught. A consistency between the teaching strategies used by the classroom teachers and those used by Teaching Parents is, therefore, maintained. If a student is not progressing, the objectives and criteria are re-evaluated, the Teaching Parent is observed, and the classroom teacher is consulted in an effort to identify and solve the problem.

The Teaching Parents' area is the largest, as it is also used for training sessions and meetings. A round table and chairs provide a place to look over the clipboards and materials to be used that day. Before the teaching time, which consists of 30 minutes, 15 minutes is allocated for preparation and, afterwards, a similar time is devoted to replacing the materials and completing the data and comment sheets. During this time, there is an opportunity for the Teaching Parent to have a cup of coffee and to interact with other parents, enabling them to share information, ideas and problems. Since they discuss such things as camp facilities, baby sitters and other items of mutual interest, a support base has been established in these new friends who can listen patiently to each other with warmth and understanding since they, too, have exceptional children (Kroth and Scholl, 1978; Schlesinger and Meadow, 1976; Schoenig, 1978). A bulletin board is available for suggestions, newsclippings, etc. and a small library is planned which will contain the latest educational and informative literature for the Teaching Parents.

The area for the teacher-coordinator and the paraprofessional is the smallest of the three areas, but provides adequate space for the work that has to be done. This area also provides privacy for parent-teacher conferences.

INITIAL EVALUATION

Since the Teaching Parents Program was only begun in August, 1979, it is too early to be evaluated effectively. However, at this point, certain results are known: absenteeism of the Teaching Parents, both for the training session and for teaching time, has been minimal. The classroom teachers have been cooperative and helpful with suggestions. There have been no major problems with data collection or teaching strategies and, to date, 21 children have met their IEP objectives.

Other students are progressing toward this point and more students are being referred into the Program by their classroom teachers. It is, therefore, anticipated that all the children in the Center could be served by the Teaching Parents Program.

In November, 1979, a meeting was held for the Teaching Parents for review, evaluation and further ongoing training. It was found that the Teaching Parents are, indeed, using some of their newly learned skills with their own exceptional children. They told of being more patient, of learning to break tasks down into smaller steps, and of going more slowly with their own children. The parents stated that they had a deeper appreciation of the task facing their child's teacher, whose class consists of many children, all having individualized programs. One parent admitted to a better understanding fo the teacher's explanation of IEP objectives and teaching strategies. There were no negative comments from the Teaching Parents.

This ongoing training included a film from Dr. Marc Gold's series Try Another Way, on task analysis. Behavior terminology was briefly reviewed. Handouts, which defined these terms and their use, were distributed. One parent commented that the handouts would be helpful at home as a form of written reference. The book Isn't It Time He Outgrew This? A Training Program for Parents of Retarded Children (Baldwin, Frederick and Broksky, 1973) was offered as a valuable resource tool for the parent's use at home. At the end of the school year, there will be a more comprehensive evaluation of the Program, when an evaluation form covering all aspects of the Program has been completed by the Teaching Parents.

A second training session was held in January, 1980, for parents who could not attend previously and for those parents new to the Program. Six new parents were recruited and participated in this session. Thus, the expected increase in parent involvement is being experienced.

CONCLUSION

The Teaching Parents Program is a new program and it is successful. Twenty-four parents agreed to listen to the idea. Twenty-one volunteered, of whom nineteen completed the training. Seventeen are presently actively and enthusiastically involved in teaching. Approximately one-half of the student body are participating in the Teaching Parents Program. Thirty-five students -- nearly one-third of the student body -- are receiving one-to-one instruction at the present time. Twenty-one children have already met their IEP objectives. Different children are being referred into the Program by their classroom teachers to replace those who have accomplished their IEP objectives.

The Teaching Parents can teach and are receiving varied teaching experiences with different exceptional children, which experiences are helping them with their own exceptional children at home, and an unexpected bonus is the support base the Program is providing for these parents.

Most importantly, the main thrust of the Teaching Parents Program is not to teach children but to teach parents to teach children. Not only is parent involvement mandated by Public Law 94-142, but the development of consistency between the home and the school, which this involvement provides, is vital for the educational success of the exceptional child. In light of all of these stated advantages, using the teaching abilities of parents in the classroom should be the priority of every educator of exceptional children.

REFERENCES

Alberto, P., & Scholfield, P. An instructional interaction pattern for the severely handicapped. Teaching Exceptional Children, Fall, 1979, 16-21.

Baldwin, V. I., Fredericks, H. D. & Brodsky, G. Isn't It Time He Outgrew This? or A Training Program For Parents of Retarded Children. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1973.

Benson, J., & Ross, L. Teaching parents to teach their children. Teaching Exceptional Children, 1972, 5, 30-35.

Edge, D., Strenecky, B., & McLaughlin, J.A. Parent involvement: A consumer perspective -- in the home and community. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded, 1979, 14, 143-144.

Fredericks, H. D., et al., A Data Based Classroom, Monmouth, Oregon: Instructional Development Corp., 1977, 138, 140, 141, 169-170, 184.

Fredericks, H. D., Baldwin, V. L. & Grove, D. A home-center-based parent training model. In D. L. Lillie & P. L. Trohanis (Eds.), Teaching Parents to Teach, New York: Walker and Company, 1976, 124, 128.

Gold, M. (Producer). Try Another Way - Task Analysis. Indianapolis, Indiana: Film Productions Company, 1974. (Film.

Korth, R. Parents - powerful and necessary allies. Teaching Exceptional Children, Spring, 1978, 90.

Kroth, R. & Scholl, G. T. Getting Schools Involved with Parents. Reston, Virginia: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1978, 25, 26.

Moersch, M. S. History and rationale for parent involvement. In S. L. Brown and M. S. Moersch (Eds.), Parents on the Team, University of Michigan Press, 1978, 4, 6, 8.

Peters, N. A. & Stephenson, W. T. Parents as partners in a program for children with oral language and reading problems. Teaching Exceptional Children, Winter, 1979, 64, 65.

Schlesinger, H. S. & Meadow, K. P. Emotional support for parents. In D. L. Lillie & P. L. Trohanis (Eds.), Teaching Parents to Teach New York: Walker and Company, 1976, 36.

Schoenig, B. P.E.E.R.S: Parents are effective early education resources. The Exceptional Parent, Feb., 1978, D12.

Smith, D. D., & Smith, J. O. Trends. In M. G. Snell (Ed.), Systematic Instruction of the Moderately and Severely Handicapped. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1978, 489.

Spradlin, J. F., & Spradlin, R. R. Developing necessary skills for entry into classroom teaching arrangements. In N. G. Haring & R. L. Schiefelbusch (Eds.), Teaching Special Children, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976, 263.

Strenecky, B., McLoughlin, J., & Edge, D. Parent involvement: A consumer perspective in the schools. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded, 1979, 14, 54-56.

Turnbull, A. P. Parent-professional interactions. In M. G. Snell (Ed.), Systematic Instruction of the Moderately and Severely Handicapped, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1978, 469-471.

Turnbull, A. P., Strickland, B. B., & Brantley, J. C. Developing and Implementing Individualized Education Programs. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1978, 7.

Westphall, R. (Producer). The Handicapped Child. Infancy Through Pre-school Self-help Skills. Irving, California: Concept Media, 1978 (Film strip).